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# CEREBUS GOING HOME 3

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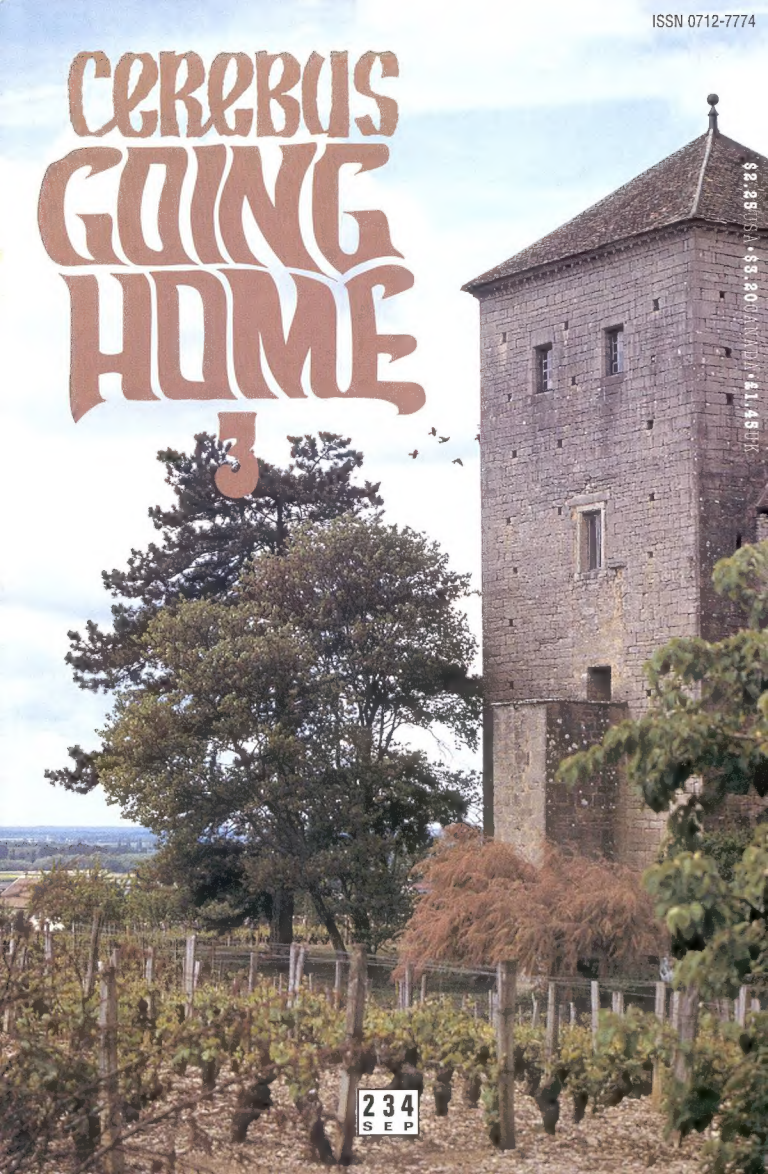

234
SEP

# MEMOIR

So, Judy the bartendress showed up one night at Peter's Place when she wasn't working. As a parenthetical note, my one big regret about having eliminated currency from Estarcion with the Cirinist takeover was that I couldn't do the "closed system" tavern. That was the original germ of an idea for *Guys* back around 1990. That is, a tavern with such a small clientele that it is largely supported by the staff, who tip each other very well. Basically just switch from behind the bar to the "fun" side of the bar when their shift is done. And there they spend all their tips buying drinks and tipping the bartender that they were serving earlier in the day.

But back to Judy. She came in and sat at the tables-and-couch combination directly behind the end barstool where I was sitting, watching the Blue Jays game on television. We exchanged a few words as I was watching the game, which was in the fifth or sixth inning. The Jays had a comfortable lead, 5-1 or 6-1, something like that.

I make it a rule not to talk to women when I'm watching the Leafs or the Jays. It's bad luck. I know that sounds funny and weird and superstitious, but there you go.

I guess I got overconfident. The Jays had been playing some good ball around that time, so I figured what the heck. I'll go over and sit and talk to Judy while I watch the game from there. I fancy myself a rational guy, and there have been a few times when I've thought that I was just being silly about women being bad luck for the Leafs and the Jays. Bad luck, yeah right. This was one of those times.

I have no idea whom they were playing, but from the moment I sat down at the table things started going wrong in the game, and the Jays' lead started to evaporate. I tried telling myself that I was just being ridiculous, but I just wanted to say to Judy, "Look, I'm sorry, but I have to stop talking to you and go back to the bar, or the Jays are going to lose." I didn't, of course. I had never told anyone about my little theory. So, once I was there, there wasn't a whole lot I could do except watch the lead evaporate and swear not to do something like that again.

Also, Judy was buying my drinks, as I recall, so I thought I would just take it as a learning experience and enjoy the free drinks and the quasi-literary conversation.

Sure enough, the other team took the lead in the top of the ninth, the Jays went down, in order, in the bottom of the ninth, and I turned to give Judy my full attention.

She gathered up her things and grinned triumphantly at me.

"So, you *can* be fooled," she said.

And at that point she left.

Ding. Round two to Judy.

CEREBUS
NO. 234 SEPTEMBER 1998

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**GOING HOME**

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(Cerebus 232 to Cerebus 265)

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Hsiffaen Shield
Hsiffaen Plateau
Hsiffaen Swamp
Ladch Valley
Hsiffaen Marshes
Little Feld River
Clifford River
Wall of Jsai
Lesser Pimina Range
Cerebus & Jaka's progress

SO SHE STARTS TELLING ME, "OH, YOU WERE SO NICE TO ME WHEN I STARTED DANCING"
"GIVING ME ADVICE AND ENCOURAGING ME..."
AND I HAD JUST BEEN LOOKING AT HER AND THINKING, "LADY! YOU ARE TOO OLD TO BE DOING THIS..."
IF SHE WAS TOO OLD, THEN WHAT WAS I?
YOU SEE?
SO RIGHT THEN AND THERE I DECIDED I WAS GOING TO DANCE FOR ONE MORE YEAR -- AND THEN GIVE IT UP FOREVER
JUST LIKE THAT.
UH-HUH
WELL--
APART FROM DRINKING MYSELF STUPID EVERY NIGHT FOR A MONTH-- AND BITING EVERYONE'S HEAD OFF WHO TRIED TO TALK TO ME
HA HA
YEAH "JUST LIKE THAT..."
SO WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH...?
OK, RIGHT... RICK! WELL, THAT WAS RIGHT AROUND THE TIME I STARTED BEING HIM EVERYWHERE -- AT THE OUTDOOR MARKET, IN THE TAVERNS, ON THE STREET
EVERY TIME I TURNED AROUND IT SEEMED
BY ACCIDENT...

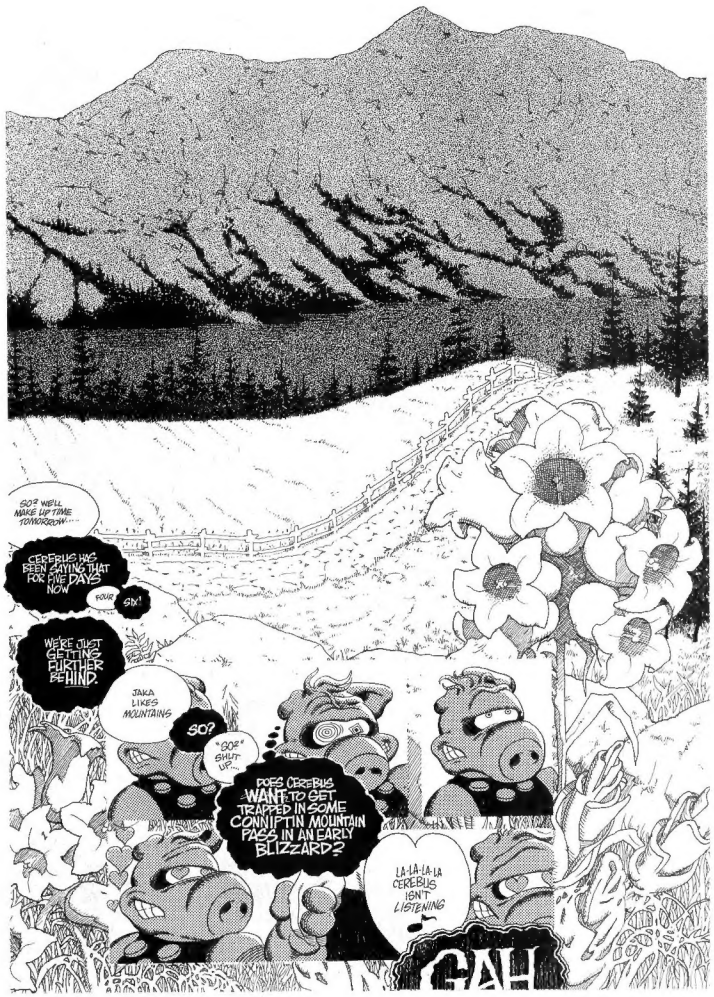
OH, COMPLETELY BY ACCIDENT. OF COURSE RICK DOESN'T BELIEVE IN ACCIDENTS -- AS I FOUND OUT LATER -- BUT, YES. COMPLETELY BY ACCIDENT
ANYWAY, THIS ONE TIME WE BOTH CAME AROUND A CORNER FROM OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS AT THE EXACT SAME MOMENT -- I WAS STILL IN A MOOD ABOUT HAVING TO QUIT DANCING...
SO I JUST SORT OF SCOWLED AT HIM
AND HE GAVE ME A BIG SMILE AND SAID, "YOU KNOW? I SEE YOU MORE THAN I SEE MY PARENTS!"
HA HAHA HAR HAH
HA HAHAHA HAH
AND THEN HE TURNED ON HIS HEEL AND WALKED AWAY...
WITHOUT SAYING ANOTHER WORD...
I'M SORRY
DID I TELL YOU THAT ONE ALREADY?
HUH?
OH.
NAY.
IT JUST... REMINDED CERBERUS OF ANOTHER STORY.

JUST AN OLD, RAMSHACKLE BUILDING -- PROBABLY RAT-INFESTED! -- BUT, TO HIM, IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE CASTLE HE WOULD OWN ONE DAY -- WHERE HE WOULD LIVE WITH HIS QUEEN
AND THEN... THEN HE SAID SOMETHING STRANGE... SOMETHING ABOUT HOW -- WHEN HE WAS JUST A BOY -- IT HAD HAD A WONDERFUL PINK RADIANCE TO IT
I LOOKED AT HIM AS IF HE WAS INSANE -- I MEAN -- WHO WOULDN'T?
WHEN HE SAW THE WAY I WAS LOOKING AT HIM HE WASN'T EMBARRASSED OR ANYTHING... HE JUST SMILED. "WHEN I WAS YOUNGER," HE SAID, "EVERYTHING LOOKED A LITTLE PINK TO ME..."
I LOOKED BACK AT THAT OLD, RAMSHACKLE BUILDING AND -- JUST FOR A SECOND -- IT DID LOOK PINK AND IT DID LOOK LIKE A TURRET WITH A PINK BANNER FLUTTERING OVER IT.
PINK!
THEN I LOOKED BACK AT RICK AND HE WAS STARING AT ME -- AND HIS EYES WERE THIS PALE, BRILLIANT BLUE COLOUR
AND -- WELL -- I WAS JUST DONE FOR.
A LITTLE TREMOR WENT THROUGH ME... AND I JUST MELTED
JUST LIKE THAT...

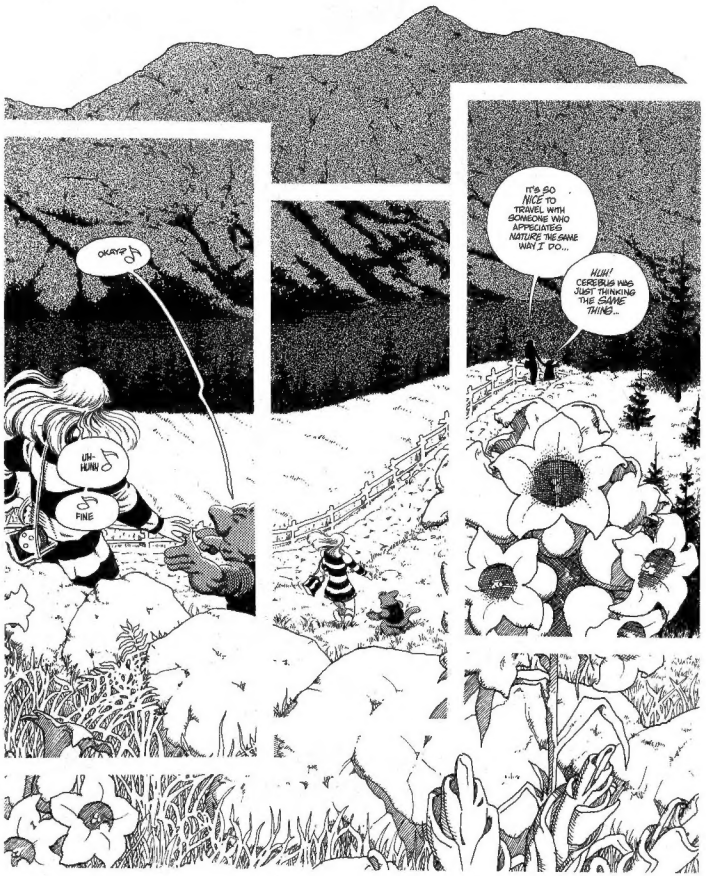
IT SEEMS SO FOOLISH NOW - I WAS JUST TERRIFIED OF GETTING OLD -- OF NOT BEING ABLE TO DANCE ANY MORE
AS IF I HAD LOST HOLD OF ALL MY OWN DREAMS
AND I NEEDED SOMEONE ELSE'S DREAMS TO GRAB ONTO
AND THE MORE IMPOSSIBLE THE DREAMS THE BETTER
WE SHOULD BE GOING.

OF COURSE, WITH RICK, THAT'S ALL THEY WERE - DREAMS.
STUPID CHILDISH
IMPOSSIBLE
DREAMS
AYE.
R.I.P. GIRLY BOY

OH! ISN'T THAT JUST MAGNIFICENT?
?
OH. AYE!
YES, SIR. THAT IS ONE. GREAT. MOUNTAIN
JUST LIKE THE LAST THREE!
DON'T START
"DON'T START" DON'T START
WE'RE FIVE DAYS BEHIND ALREADY


SO? WE'LL MAKE UP TIME TOMORROW...
CERBERUS HAS BEEN SAYING THAT FOR FIVE DAYS NOW
FOUR
SIX!
WE'RE JUST GETTING FURTHER BEHIND.
JAKA LIKES MOUNTAINS
SO?
"SO?" SHUT UP...
DOES CERBERUS WANT TO GET TRAPPED IN SOME CONNIPTIN MOUNTAIN PASS IN AN EARLY BLIZZARD?
LA-LA-LA-LA CERBERUS ISN'T LISTENING
GAH

CEREBUS DOESN'T GET IT
WHAT IS IT THAT SHE SEES?
IT'S A BIG PILE OF ROCKS
MANY BIG PILES OF ROCKS -- ALL IN ONE PLACE
MAYBE THAT'S IT, MAYBE CEREBUS IS LOOKING AT THE WRONG PILE
LIKE
THAT -- UP AND DOWN PART -- WHERE THEY'RE ALL SORT OF LEANING TO ONE SIDE
MAGNIFICENT...
IT'S JUST MAGNIFICENT THE WAY THEY ALL.... ALL.... SORT OF
WHAT IS IT THAT SHE SEES?
IT'S A BIG STUPID PILE OF ROCKS
IT'S NOT EVEN A REAL MOUNTAIN
(CRYIN' OUT LOUD)
AT THIS RATE
BY THE TIME WE GET TO THE GODS' FENCE
IT'LL TAKE US TWO DAYS TO GO HALF A MILE!!
"OH! LOOK AT "THAT ONE"! OH! AND "THAT ONE"!"
CAREFUL!
UH-HUH!


OKAY?
UH-HUH
FINE
IT'S SO NICE TO TRAVEL WITH SOMEONE WHO APPRECIATES NATURE THE SAME WAY I DO...
HUH! CEREBUS WAS JUST THINKING THE SAME THING...

I THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALL THE TIME AFTER RICK AND I GOT MARRIED...
HE'D TALK ABOUT THE WALL OF 1731 OR THE T'CAPWAN KINGDOMS OR BORGALA
AND I'D BE THINKING "YOU TALK ABOUT THEM BUT CEREBUS HAS ACTUALLY BEEN THERE"
I'D FEEL LIKE SCREAMING SOMETIMES "YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TEN MILES FROM IEST, RICK..."
"YOU'RE JUST A DREAMER! IT'S ALL FANTASY AND NONSENSE"

OH, WELL. "MARRY IN HASTE AND REPENT AT LEISURE," AS THEY SAY...
REMEMBER WHEN YOU CAME TO STAY WITH US? AND I GAVE YOU MY LITTLE "I LOVE MY HUSBAND" SPEECH?
AYE.

AFTER I FINISHED, I JUST SAT THERE HOPING YOU WOULD SAY, "FINE, JAKO. YOU LOVE RICK..."
"...BUT YOU BELONG WITH CEREBUS... FUCK A BAG. WE'RE LEAVING TONIGHT."
I WOULD'VE PACKED MY BAG, KISSED RICK GOODBYE AND LEFT WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE

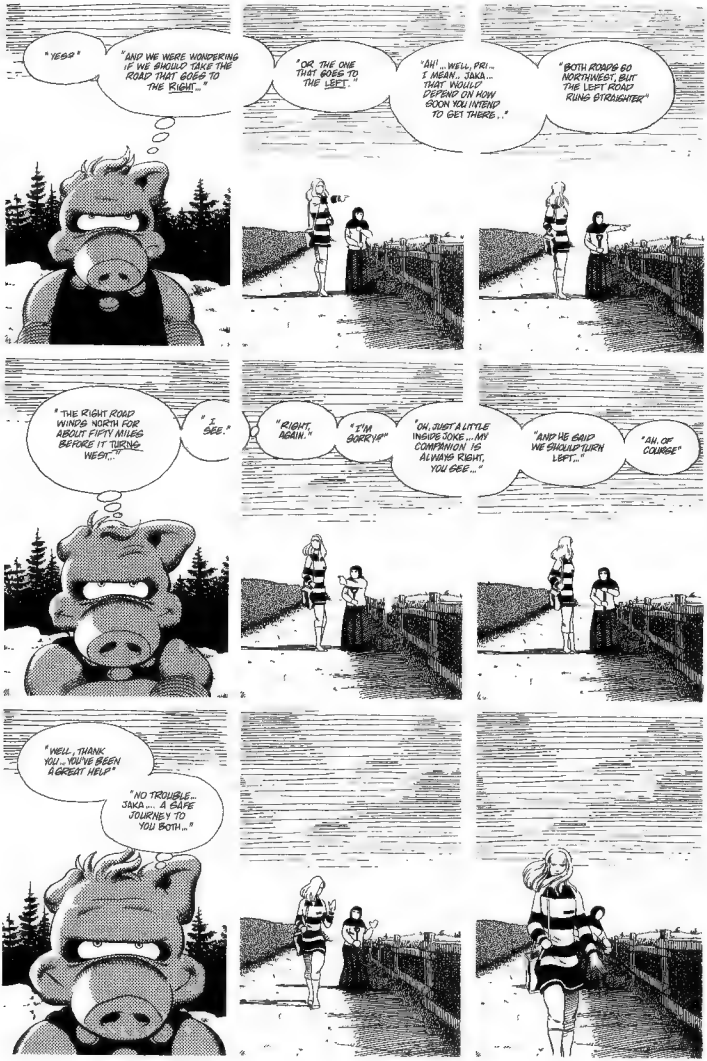
SERIOUSLY
UHH-HUH
WHAT?
?
HOLD IT. HOLD IT.
NOW CEREBUS HAS NO CHOICE
"NO CHOICE"?
"NO CHOICE" ABOUT WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T TELL CEREBUS THAT AT THE TIME
NOW.
CEREBUS HAS NO CHOICE BUT
TO TICKLE YOU UNTIL YOU PEE IN YOUR PANTIES
tickle?
NO!
CEREBUS? I MEAN IT
tickle tickle...
CEREBUS?
I'M
NOT.
KIDDING!
tickle tickle tickle
OH. WELL.
'S ONE WAY TO MAKE UP ANOTHER QUARTER MILE OR SO
tickle tickle tickle

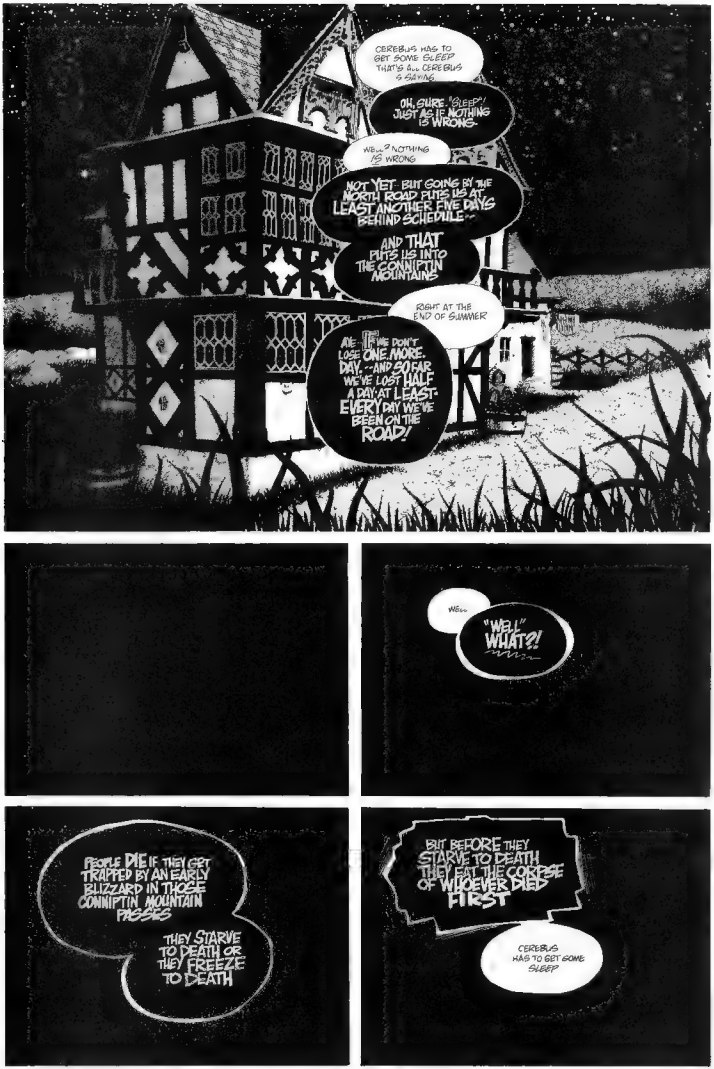
"SNIFF SNIFF"
"MMM SMELLS LIKE TICKLE STARCH-ME COW WILL SAY"
giggle
YOU ARE SUCH A PERVERT! YOU JUST LOVE THE IDEA OF MY UDDER SOAKED PANTIES LYING IN THAT PASTURE BACK THERE
OH, AYE!
NO-I'M NOT GOING TO "HOLD HANDS" WITH YOU
I'M STILL ANGRY.
SNIP.
HA!
OKA-AY♪
BUT YOURSELF♪
?

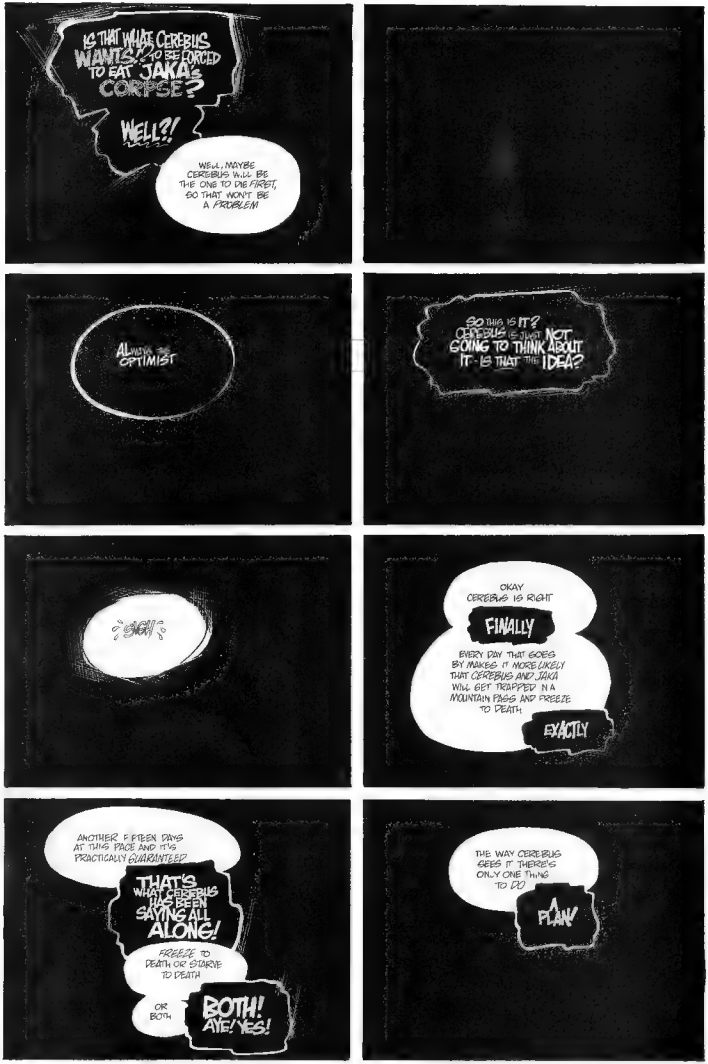
WE GO
RIGHT
HERE
HEH
JAKA
CERBERUS KNOWS THIS ROAD LIKE THE BACK OF HIS HAND
WE GO LEFT HERE
WHAT
ERT

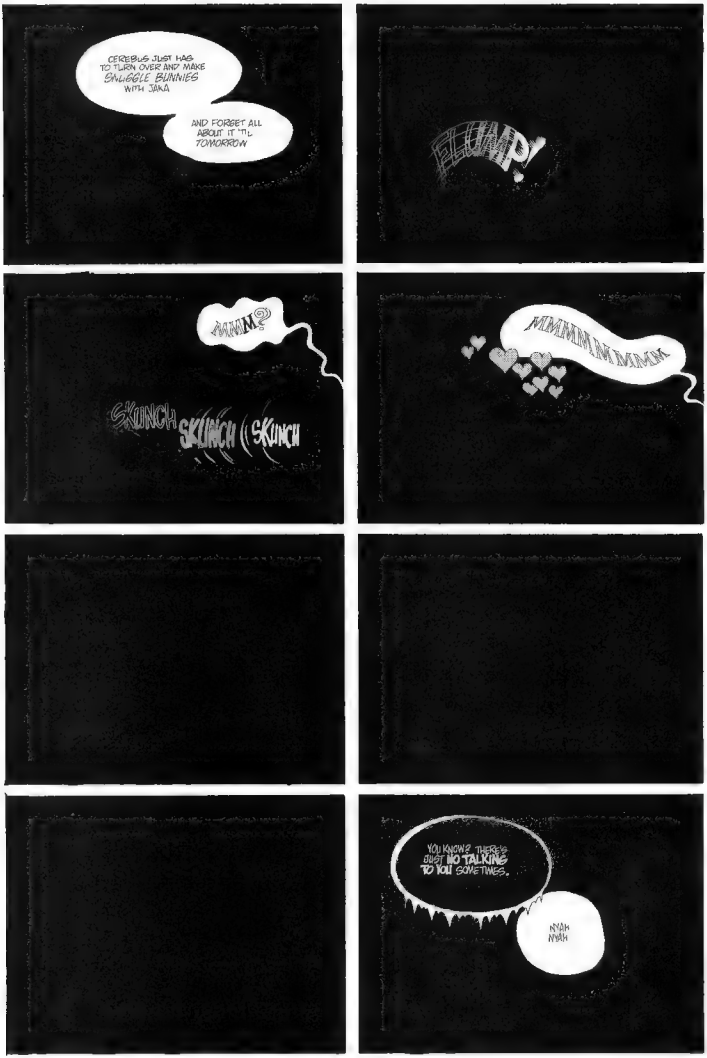
?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TO ASK DIRECTIONS
DIRECTIONS?
JAKA, WE DON'T NEED
JAKA.
WE DON'T
"EXCUSE ME?"
"YES, PRINCESS?"
"OH, PLEASE JUST CALL ME JAKA."
"MY COMPANION AND I ARE TRAVELLING UP TO THE GODS' FENCE?"


"YESS"
"AND WE WERE WONDERING IF WE SHOULD TAKE THE ROAD THAT GOES TO THE RIGHT..."
"OR, THE ONE THAT GOES TO THE LEFT."
"AH! ...WELL, PRI... I MEAN... JAKA... THAT WOULD DEPEND ON HOW SOON YOU INTEND TO GET THERE..."
"BOTH ROADS GO NORTHWEST, BUT THE LEFT ROAD RUNS STRAIGHTER"
"THE RIGHT ROAD WINDS NORTH FOR ABOUT FIFTY MILES BEFORE IT TURNS WEST..."
"I SEE."
"RIGHT, AGAIN."
"I'M SORRY!"
"OH, JUST A LITTLE INSIDE JOKE... MY COMPANION IS ALWAYS RIGHT, YOU SEE..."
"AND HE SAID WE SHOULD TURN LEFT..."
"AH, OF COURSE"
"WELL, THANK YOU... YOU'VE BEEN A GREAT HELP"
"NO TROUBLE... JAKA.... A SAFE JOURNEY TO YOU BOTH..."

A... OF THE PUBS AND TAVERNS ON THE LEFT ROAD WERE TORN DOWN SO THEY COULD WIDEN IT
IT'S BASICALLY JUST A SUPPLY ROUTE FOR DISTRICTS TWO AND THREE NOW...
TORN DOWN!?
THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID!
THOSE WERE SOME OF THE BEST PUBS AND TAVERNS IN ESTARCION!
WHOSE STUPID IDEA WAS THAT?!
WELL... DON'T LOOK AT ME, MON...
I'VE NEVER TOLD ANYONE TO TEAR DOWN A PUB OR A TAVERN IN MY LIFE


CEREBUS HAS TO GET SOME SLEEP! THAT'S ALL CEREBUS IS SAYING.
OH, SURE. "SLEEP." JUST AS IF NOTHING IS WRONG.
WELL? NOTHING IS WRONG
NOT YET. BUT GOING BY THE NORTH ROAD PUTS US AT LEAST ANOTHER FIVE DAYS BEHIND SCHEDULE--
AND THAT PUTS US INTO THE CONNIPTIN MOUNTAINS
RIGHT AT THE END OF SUMMER
AIE. IF WE DON'T LOSE ONE MORE DAY.--AND SO FAR WE'VE LOST HALF A DAY AT LEAST-- EVERY DAY WE'VE BEEN ON THE ROAD!
WELL--
"WELL" WHAT?!
PEOPLE DIE IF THEY GET TRAPPED BY AN EARLY BLIZZARD IN THOSE CONNIPTIN MOUNTAIN PASSES
THEY STARVE TO DEATH OR THEY FREEZE TO DEATH
BUT BEFORE THEY STARVE TO DEATH THEY EAT THE CORPSE OF WHOEVER BLED FIRST
CEREBUS HAS TO GET SOME SLEEP


IS THAT WHAT CERBERUS WANTS? TO BE FORCED TO EAT JAKA'S CORPSE?
WELL?!
WELL, MAYBE CERBERUS WILL BE THE ONE TO DIE FIRST, SO THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM
ALWAYS AN OPTIMIST
SO THIS IS IT? CERBERUS IS JUST NOT GOING TO THINK ABOUT IT - IS THAT THE IDEA?
SIGH
OKAY CERBERUS IS RIGHT
FINALLY
EVERY DAY THAT GOES BY MAKES IT MORE LIKELY THAT CERBERUS AND JAKA WILL GET TRAPPED IN A MOUNTAIN PASS AND FREEZE TO DEATH
EXACTLY
ANOTHER FIFTEEN DAYS AT THIS PACE AND IT'S PRACTICALLY GUARANTEED
THAT'S WHAT CERBERUS HAS BEEN SAYING ALL ALONG!
FREEZE TO DEATH OR STARVE TO DEATH
OR BOTH
BOTH! AYE! YES!
THE WAY CERBERUS SEES IT THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO
PLAN!


CERBERUS JUST HAS TO TURN OVER AND MAKE SNUGGLE BUNNIES WITH JIAO
AND FORGET ALL ABOUT IT 'TIL TOMORROW
FLUMP!
MMMM?
SKUNCH SKUNCH SKUNCH
MMMMMM MMMM
YOU KNOW? THERE'S JUST NO TALKING TO YOU SOMETIMES.
NYAH NYAH

# AARDVARK COMMENT

Dave,

C'mon — get Cerebus out of the bar and back into the story line! (Please!)

The man/woman controversy is, of course, very ironic. A friend of mine once cynically commented, "Women are just as afraid of commitments as men," challenging the popular notion of the philandering, responsibility-fearing man versus the noble, dutiful woman. And of course they are. Bertrand Russell once wrote a short essay called "The Superior Virtue of the Oppressed," in which he criticizes that very notion (not that women in the U.S. and Canada can be called oppressed — which brings us to the paradox, "If you are standing in a forest, and you call yourself oppressed, but nobody is around to pander to you, did you still make a noise?"). Many of your end-page essays make me think, reconsider old notions, look at myself, and I have to admit they have influenced my thinking. I just wish the story line would move on. I reckon I have missed many of your more subtle messages and literary devices, so I am not getting as much from the story as you are obviously putting into it. I suspect you are contrasting Joanne with Jaka (Cerebus choosing Joanne over Jaka in that rather surreal what-if episode a few years back), where Jaka represents the ideal of feminine strength while Joanne represents everything vulgar and trite that a woman could possibly aspire to.

My major bone about this is that Joanne is so trite and Rick so nothing-nothing that I think you have given them far too much voice in the series. Other female characters such as Astoria will succeed Cirin, right? (You implied that in the visionary scene near the end of *Church and State.*)

And Suenteus Po, Sir Gherrik, "Something Fell..." all these intriguing ideas you have virtually neglected for over five years! Granted, the inequities between male and female relations are often outrageous, but, in support of your article about "manliness," one must look beyond these things. I imagine you are using Cerebus to represent a person's inability to look beyond life's vulgarities, i.e., Cerebus has been hiding in a bar for the last ten years, going nowhere, because he would rather stew over his bitterness. Cerebus has learned a lot about himself (and hopefully the reader too), I admit, so I realize you have a very strong purpose in what you are doing. However, noting that *Cerebus* ends in less than 75 issues, I also realize that time is running out. In those rare moments that you have returned to the "Greater Story Line," I have always been left captivated and excited about the next issue. Lately (i.e., for the last five years), I open the book, skim Cerebus' drunken meanderings, nod my head in agreement over Joanne's triviality, chuckle at the strange (often non-sequiturish) assortment of characters who enter the bar, and then close the magazine telling myself, "Next book will be different." Your skills as a storyteller seem to be wasted on Joanne, Rick, and the bar. Not that this period of Cerebus' life isn't keeping to the logical course of Cerebus' development (from Pope to bum — who wouldn't feel like giving up?), but you have dwelt so long in this one setting and there are so many more exciting things you have created that cry to be told.

Tim Hammack
215 E. Paddock
Savoy, IL 61874

*I hate to break this to you, Tim, but the story line is done. I mean, in my head the whole thing is finished with a certain amount of "filling in the blanks" left to go. I hope you enjoy what it is that I have planned, but, just offhand, I would say that most of what you seem to be interested in was wrapped up by the end of* Mothers & Daughters *-- which is really the end of the formal* Cerebus *story line. Of course, for all I know, you're enjoying the book again. One of the problems with running these dated letters.*

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

To the angel of the congregation in Aardvark-Vanaheim write,

These are the things the faithful one says, he who formerly dwelt in England, but who now dwells in Italy.

I know your deeds that you endured long in the reading of the entire Holy writings, however I hold this against you that you deem it just to sum up the whole scripture in the saying WISDOM IS OF MORE VALUE THAN REASON, and while I was pondering on this truth, I realized that it was neither hot nor cold but lukewarm, and so I proceeded to vomit it out of my mouth.

But I perceive that you are not completely without hope and so buy for yourself eye salve that you may see more clearly. Having applied this salve, search for a true and eternally more valid theme in all Holy scripture, then once an end has been made to your meditation and a conclusion has been reached, apply yourself to the writing of this theme and any related thoughts in the later section of your monthly scroll.

P.S. Try this as a Biblical theme: Genesis 3:15, 15:5, 21:12, 2, Samuel 7:12-16, Galatians 3:16, 19, Revelation 12: 7-17, Romans 16:20, and Revelation 21:1-4. I know that any mention of God sorting out things on Earth normally gets fobbed off as an excuse for not doing anything to improve the situation, but the Bible clearly states both that God will do something and that we are responsible for our actions. So I do not see this hope as an excuse for not being responsible towards society.

An English Deity in Italy
via E Gardomo 5
62017 Portorecanati MC
Italy

*Deity, huh? Capital letter and everything. For the sake of space, let's leave aside your puerile blasphemies (declaring yourself to be a deity, your paraphrase of the address to the Laodicean Church in the third chapter of* The Revelation of St. John, *addressing your letter to some non-existent "angel" of the "congregation of Aardvark-Vanaheim"). Let's leave aside the reason you left England for Italy (though I think I have a good hunch on that one). I'll even leave aside your arrogance in instructing me to finish my book with a more down-to-earth reference from* The Hustler:

Fats *(uncomfortably). Just shoot pool, Fast Eddie.*

Eddie. *I am shooting pool, Fats. When I'm done, you can shoot*

*Patience, whoever-you-are, patience.*

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

Dear Dave Sim:

Re: Inner Child

The inner child that I have always believed that adults have lost touch with is the one that can imagine that Tinkerbell is on your shoulder. She is talking to you, and you are Peter Pan or Donree, the baby dragon who lives under your bed. Or you have a …

A universe of imagination: where the real and the imaginary are one. The inner child says: "I want that" if one lives in the world of Freud, if one has never grown from baby to boy, to man, if one has never found one's place in the world. That creates a mama's boy. It creates stunted growth. It keeps one as a boy. One remains: "I want that."

It is perverse: I know my place: I am outside. I am outside.

My son says: "Tinkerbell is on my shoulder" and there is no one there. My mother says: "Don't you wish you had an imagination like that?" I say: "I do have an imagination like that."

I am outside. Imagination takes me outside of the group. It makes people feel that I am odd. The one who talks to inanimate objects. The one who has conversations with three or four people by himself, aloud. I am odd. I am outside. I am perverse. I am at peace within myself. I do not believe the world is at peace with what I am. I create. It is all that I am.

If I lived in the Amazon rain forest, I would have what is deemed by civilized culture as a psychotic episode and become a shaman.

I am outside. If I were a shaman, I would have a place.

We have killed the inner children within ourselves.
We have killed the imagination with which we are born.
We have killed the shamans.
We have killed religion.
We have killed God. *(You IDIOT - Dave)*
We have killed the divine within ourselves that makes the rocks sing, when the sun sets, we stand in awe of the universe and the universe within ourselves.

If the inner child is the one that says: "I want that," we are all mama's boys.

"Inner child" copyright and trademark 17 March 1998, 9:57 p.m., Charles Hudson Greene-Cattell.

Sincerely,
Charles Hudson Greene-Cattell
982 East Orange Street
Lancaster, PA 17602

P.S. Some days I just miss that long snout.

*Grow up, Charles. Millions upon millions of men gave their lives so you can sit around with the back of your hand nailed to your forehead. Aren't you just a little bit ashamed?*

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

Dave,

Re: "If Superman existed…"

This one's short and lighthearted.

If Superman existed, the mass of innocent bystanders and citizens-in-distress he encounters every day would soon become to him as homeless people on the streets are to us. I could see him "having enough" pretty soon and, you know, flying to the other side of the street to avoid passing a bank; going several blocks out of his way to avoid a gathered crowd (not wanting to be late for a date with Lois, of course); refusing to catch someone falling off a building because the person in question will only waste his life anyway.

And is it possible that God has that same reaction?

There — less than a page!

Larry Hart

*That is definitely... an opinion. It's one I don't share, however. I think God is a Spirit Who knows everything about my innermost motivations. My own conscious mind, in my view, can only perceive scraps and fragments of who and what I actually am (and even those scraps and fragments are seen through distorted lenses and reflected in funhouse mirrors of vanity and self-absorbed corruption). To me, sincere worship of God is the only sensible way of getting the best part of myself into the metaphorical pilot seat of my conscious mind — however intermittently and imperfectly I can manage it.*

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

Dear David,

I have been reading *Cerebus* for two years, and I am very impressed with what you have done. In fact, I have ordered and read the entire series, except for *Cerebus* #0. (My comics distributor tells me that he has some trouble getting his hands on it. In fact, I will probably have to order it directly through you; I just like to support the local shop first whenever I can give him the chance.) Before I offer my own opinion concerning your publication, I wanted to admit that there are times I do not "get it." The second part to this is that I have never had as much fun trying to get it until I started reading *Cerebus*.

Then again, it does not actually take a rocket scientist to figure out *X-Men*.

*Rick's Story* is nearly complete, and I look forward to seeing in what direction you take Cerebus next. The question that has been bugging me is: Are you really concerned about the amount of time you have spent in the bar? I don't think you should be. The time that has passed in *Guys* and *Rick's Story* has allowed you to develop Cerebus' character that is 180 degrees different than the Cerebus that did battle with Cirin. I'm sure that it can be argued that this kind of character development took place back in *Minds*. However, I feel what *Minds* did was simply close the story line that was in motion at the time and then set the stage for the character development that would take place at the bar.

So how has Cerebus changed? Well, the best way I can answer this question is to ask another. Why has Cerebus not killed Rick yet? I unfortunately do not have enough insight to answer this question, but I am willing to bet that whoever does is probably able to articulate how Cerebus has developed.

Now, concerning your readership: I think there are far too many "doomsayers" out there. These guys should get a grip. I realize that when *Cerebus* ends it will be a great loss for the entire industry, however there are still six more years to go. I for one am excited about reading a publication that will continue for that long, be printed in a timely manner, and with the same creative team that started it. How many other comics can say the same? Most have trouble doing that for 4 to 5 issues in a row. (*Heroes Reborn* is a good example of my point. In fact, *Heroes Reborn* is another good example of why I have given up on Marvel entirely.) Keep up the good work, guys!

Now, in regard to Mr. "I would like a sketch of Mick": Dave, could you please pass along a deep and heartfelt "Thanx." Thanx for screwing us new guys who are just trying to get an even break! Please also feel free to remind him that an original idea is best communicated if there is a familiar point of reference. So there, Mr. "Gimmme, gimmme, gimmme, she can't think on her own"!

That's about all I can come up with that could possibly be considered worthy of your time. Thank you for such an entertaining and thoughtful product. I am anxious to get the next issue.

Sincerely,
Dan Winton

P.S. Please excuse the handwritten post script, however I wanted to jot this down before I stuck it in the mail. I just figured out why he has not killed Rick yet. Cerebus sure does have trouble holding onto his sword, doesn't he? Oh well, so much for character revelation. Bear with me, I am still in the learning process of how to take comics seriously.

*Well, since you brought up Jeff...*

❁❁❁❁❁❁❁❁❁

Well, geez, Dave! I didn't mean to piss you off. I mean, it's not like I asked you to make Cerebus say, "Hey, everybody! Go beat up Jeff in Sedalia 'cause he pissed off Dave and ruined it for everyone!" — ("Fucking writers," indeed!)

So, I'm hereby petulantly and hastily withdrawing my request. Of course, you know that this means that I have to start stalking you if I ever hope to get that sketch…

At least I got my first letter printed in a seminal issue. Or the *latest* seminal issue. The greatest such being, of course, #209… So to speak.

Yours beyond 300,
Jeff Seiler
Kansas City, MO

P.S. That's right, I moved. But I'm not stupid enough to tell *you* where.

*Yes, you are. I have the envelope right here. "Jeff Seiler, 5303 Persimmon Trail, Apt. 14, Kansas City, Missouri, 64129." Can't be that you're still holding out hope for the Mick or Keef sketch, can it? Tell you what — if ten* Cerebus *fans send you a Mick or Keef sketch, then I'll send you one. How's that? Doesn't matter how bad the ten sketches are. And (what else?) Ah! You send me the addresses of everyone who sends you a Mick or Keef sketch, and I'll send everyone (not everyone, Dave. That's stupid. Pay attention here) the first ten... (first ten, that's good. What? What'll I send them? Oh, I know)... an Elrod bunny or a Cerebus tree on a post-it note. Their choice. Autographed by Cerebus or Elrod, even.*

*Heads up, folks. I'm answering the next one in the body of the letter:*

❁❁❁❁❁❁❁❁❁

"Fear of commitment" or "Just not interested"? It seems to me that single men who like being single are seen as some kind of a threat; that it's okay to be single, so long as you'd really rather be married (or at least monogamously committed — commonly misperceived as "grown up"). I suppose "Fear of commitment" is one way of dealing with the "threat" of the single, heterosexual male… *Boy, I can't help agreeing with you on this one. I think it was Jerry Seinfeld who said that what amazes him is not that so many marriages fail, but that they even take place at all. "Agreeing to be with one other person for the rest of your life. That should happen, what, once or twice a century."*

"Mid-life crisis" or "Realization of compromise"? *Well, let's not rule out: "Waiting 'til the fourth quarter to assess whether you really want to 'play the game.'" There is a certain "duh" factor, to me.*

Jon Lovitz was on the Conan O'Brien show and said that while watching the movie *Crimson Tide* with his girlfriend, she complained that the submarines and the torpedoes were all shaped like penises. Lovitz responded that if the torpedoes were shaped like vaginas, they would fill up with water two seconds after they were fired and

sink to the bottom of the ocean. *That Jon sure has a way of cutting to the chase, doesn't he?*

How much would it cost to "nurture" and "support" vagina-shaped torpedoes? What actions would we be prepared to take to make sure that vagina-shaped torpedoes are given an equal chance to compete? Should we "weigh down" penis-shaped torpedoes to make it "fair"? *Hey, you're the country with the Empire wrapped around you. I can't see the Pentagon doing a feasibility study on vagina-shaped torpedos as altogether different from what they're doing now. It's just a* little *funnier.*

Luke Skywalker couldn't shoot his load into the hole at the end of the Death Star trench until he got in touch with his feelings. *I thought he had to get in touch with "the force," but then I haven't seen the movie since it came out.* Close Encounters, *right?*

OJ was in touch with his feelings. *Wow. Scary observation, man. Do you really think so? You mean, in the sense that he was completely unhinged, paranoid, homicidal, but he knew exactly what he was feeling? Man. I'm going to be mulling that one over for a few weeks.*

Who was it that said, "The reason wife-swapping never caught on is that all wives are pretty much the same"? Was it you? *Mm. No, not me. I think wife-swapping never caught on because it is implicitly destructive of maintaining a monogamous relationship. Since only monogamous relationships work (hmm, make that "work"), in my experience, I think the wives caught on to the implicit destructiveness before the husbands did (or, at least, before their husbands'* dicks *did) and just, you know, put their foot down before everything got way out of hand.*

"A penis, once imbedded in the vagina, can become more aware of the vagina than its own phallitude." — Norman Mailer. *That sounds like it's from* Prisoner of Sex. *I can even hear Norman Mailer's voice doing that line. Interesting, the number of guys who wouldn't see a problem in their penises being more aware of the vagina than their own "phallitude." Even more interesting, the number of guys who would think that was the whole idea. Even more interesting, the number of guys who... no, I'd better quit now. Thanks, Raymond.*

Raymond Hulin
Seattle, WA

P.S. (*Mothers and Daughters I, II, III,* and *IV* would have looked better on the spines, but then I guess you would have had to find some other way to sneak *Women Read(s) Minds* onto our bookshelves.)

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dear Dave:

I went down where the vultures eat
I would have gone deeper but there wasn't any need
Heard the tongues of angels
And the tongues of men
Wasn't any difference to me

*Dignity,*
Bob Dylan

My local retailer forgot to order issue 227 so I have to wait for it and be happy with parts one and three of your new essay, uh, *Mama's Boy.* Well, you're right: superhero comics do cater to us mama's boys, and it does hurt, a little (a lot), but, hey, I can deal with it, in private, alone, by myself. Y'know, it's not the size that... never mind. Anyway, I'm quite moved by your words, not only on superhero comics but life in general as well, and look forward to parts two and four. Memo to that guy (I'm too lazy to look your name up — sorry, buddy) who wrote the letter in part three: Don't defend us; we can deal with it; Dave hit the nail on the head. Here's to hoping that it sticks in our brains and we can improve ourselves. I already notice I'm acting a little different around both of my sons. Hey, man, if you can help make me a better dad, maybe you can help turn this train wreck of an industry around and restore a little dignity to it *and* its fans.

Dave Hayes
Third Stone From the Sun

*Nice to hear from you again, Dave. Actually, I think that dignity in the comic-book field is really just a matter of looking at those things that have some dignity attached to them and ignoring the things that don't. I find if I only read dignified material (I'm re-reading* Doing the Islands With Bacchus *about once a week. Likewise with* Graffiti Kitchen*), everything looks a lot less bleak. Reread* Maus *a couple of nights ago. Seth's* It's a Good Life If You Don't Weaken; *Chester's* The Little Man. *I mean, train wreck? What train wreck?*

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dave,

RE: #229 — At long last... the legendary "interior of a submarine" panel.

You guys crack me up.

Thanx,
Eric Hess
1 Windsor Rd., Apt A6
PGH, IA 15239

*We live but to serve, Eric. You know that.*

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dave,

You do this *every* time. At times when money is a fickle mistress, I say: Okay, no more comics — I'll stop buying *Cerebus* after the current story line ends.

Then you create something like #230.

You magnificent bastard (nothing personal against your mother).

Matt Towler

*Mum? It's okay — Matt didn't mean anything by it.*

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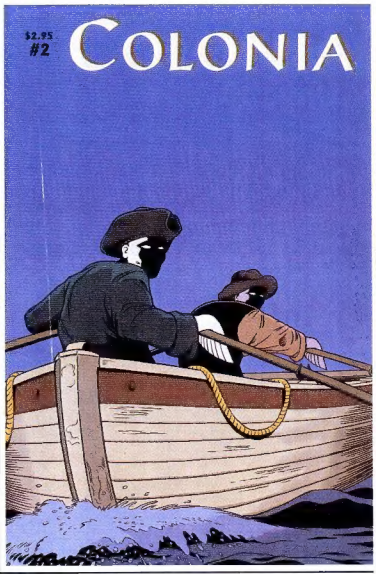

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